

Vietnamese Venison-Stock Noodle Soup

By David Schmetterling | Preparation time: 9 hours (stock) | Cooking time (soup): 65 minutes | Serves 4–6



Soup stock

INGREDIENTS

4 lbs. venison bones containing some meat
4 T. olive oil
Kosher salt
2 T. fresh rosemary, chopped (or 2 t. dried)
1 T. crushed black peppercorns
1 T. dried thyme
4 bay leaves
1 medium onion, chopped
2 large carrots, chopped
4 celery stalks, chopped
½ c. fresh parsley, chopped
Table salt to taste

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 400 F. degrees.

With a hacksaw, cut bones into large pieces that will fit into a stock pot. Coat bones with olive oil and a liberal dose of kosher salt. Place bones on a rack in a roasting pan and roast until golden brown (about 3 hours).

Put the bones in a large stockpot, cover with cold water, and bring to a simmer. Periodically skim the foam that forms on the surface and simmer gently for at least 4 hours.

Add the remaining ingredients and simmer for another 2 hours.

Remove bones and strain stock through a colander into another pot. Discard vegetables and herbs. Ladle the venison stock through a jelly strainer bag or cheesecloth to strain again. Add salt to taste to the clarified stock and pour into quart jars.

Let the stock cool overnight in the refrigerator. When it cools, a hard fat layer will form at the top. Remove with a spoon and discard.

Use the stock at once as the base for a soup or in place of water in other recipes to add a scrumptious, savory note—or freeze it. It keeps frozen for a year.

Note that this broth is not specifically seasoned for the Vietnamese dishes pho or Bún bò Huế, but it makes a great basic noodle soup. ■

Wild game is a precious resource, so I try to use as much of every harvested animal as possible—including the bones. The best use of bones is for making stock. Stock or broth (made from meat or vegetables) is the foundation for the world's most delicious soups. I developed my stock recipe (right) using the bones of deer, elk, antelope, or moose. The recipe below is for a noodle soup found throughout Vietnam that I learned to make during several visits. It makes great use of venison stock. ■

—David Schmetterling is the FWP Fisheries Research Program coordinator in Missoula.

Noodle soup

INGREDIENTS

32 oz. venison stock, 16 oz. water
¼ c. lime juice
5 star anise seeds
1 cinnamon stick
1 T. crushed coriander seed

DIRECTIONS

Put the stock and water in a large pot and add the next seven ingredients (through the MSG). Let simmer 1 hour until aromatic and the chopped onion is soft.

Boil noodles in the soup (if using rice noodles, only for 1 minute).

Lift noodles from soup with pasta fork and place in serving bowls. Put the thinly sliced raw venison on top. Ladle boiling hot soup over the venison to quickly cook the meat. (Another option is to quickly stir-fry the venison with a bit of crushed garlic, fish sauce, vegetable oil, and hot peppers, and add that to the stock.)

Serve with heaps of fresh mint leaves, fresh cilantro leaves, bean sprouts, Thai or regular basil leaves, sliced hot peppers, and lime wedges. Season with fish sauce if you want more saltiness. ■

*Also known as “umami flavoring,” MSG (monosodium glutamate) is a flavor enhancer often added to restaurant foods, canned vegetables, soups, and deli meats. MSG’s hard-to-duplicate sweet, salty taste is also a mainstay of many Asian foods. Though some people react to MSG, the Mayo Clinic and the Food and Drug Administration consider it generally safe.

6 whole cloves
1 yellow onion, chopped
1 t. MSG*
1 lb. rice noodles (often labeled as bún or pho noodles) or ramen noodles. If using dry rice noodles, soak in lukewarm water for 30 minutes before boiling (be careful not to overcook).
8–12 oz. thinly sliced venison steak
3 cloves garlic, crushed
2–3 T. vegetable oil (if stir-frying meat)

